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National Intelligence Estimate

Prospects for Bosnia

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This National Intelligence Estimate represents the views of the Director of Central Intelligence with the advice and assistance of the US Intelligence Community.

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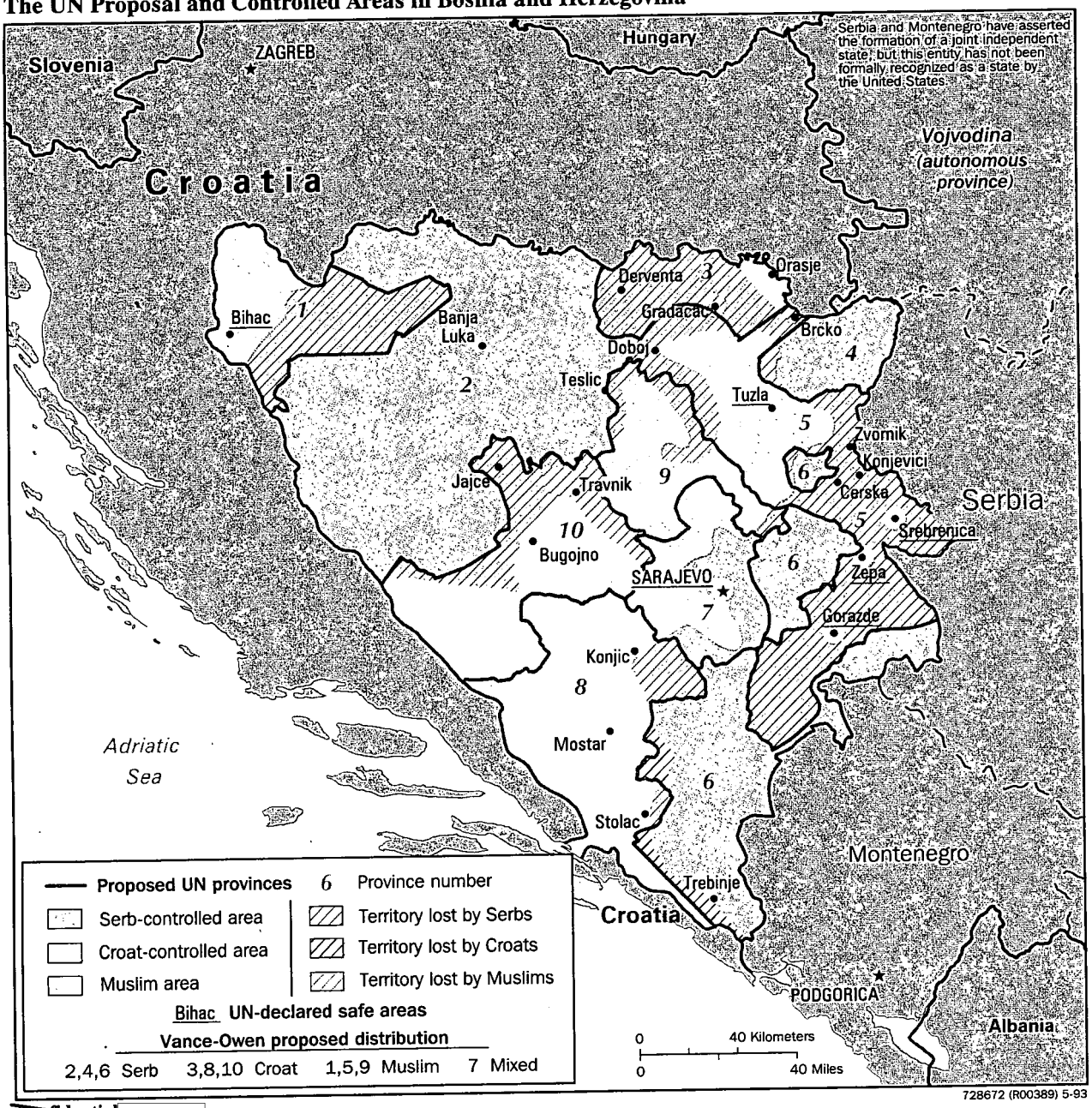
Figure 1
The UN Proposal and Controlled Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Key Judgments

The Vance-Owen Plan holds little prospect of preserving a unitary Bosnia in the long run:

- The agreement runs afoul of the conflicting territorial goals of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims.
- Serbs and Croats will consolidate their military gains regardless of boundary adjustments agreed to under international negotiation.
- Bosnian Muslims expect that Serbia and Croatia will try to absorb contiguous portions of a fragmented Bosnia and can be expected to resist strongly.

The warring parties doubt that the international community has the will to undertake major military operations and sustain the long-term presence necessary to preserve a multiethnic Bosnia. They will test this resolve at every opportunity but probably will avoid large-scale, direct attacks on UN forces.

None of the parties can match a NATO-led force operating under rules of engagement that allow all necessary means to enforce the Plan. Under such circumstances, assuming early challenges were met with force, fighting would be reduced and humanitarian problems mitigated. But terrorist campaigns are possible within and outside the former Yugoslavia. Even a single attack could cause a large number of casualties.

International military operations in Bosnia under any plan will be difficult to organize and deploy:

- Issues of command and control, rules of engagement, levels of troop contributions, and cost sharing remain unresolved.
- While capable of making modest additional contributions, NATO allies would expect the United States to commit a major share of troops to an international force, as well as logistic, strategic lift, and intelligence support.

- UN forces will have to supervise and enforce demilitarization and troop withdrawals and monitor heavy weaponry, internal routes, and external frontiers.

- UN forces also will have to assume major responsibilities for refugees and displaced persons, civil administration, and rebuilding efforts in the areas they occupy.

Regardless of any decision to undertake military operations against the Bosnian Serbs, Western governments will continue diplomatic efforts to end the fighting. If such efforts fail, the fighting will continue indefinitely.

Most likely, the warring parties as well as the international community are headed toward variants of the Vance-Owen Plan that will not preserve a multiethnic state: UN safehavens for Muslims perhaps leading to a rump Muslim-dominated state, Muslim entities associated with Croatia, or de facto UN protected zones throughout Bosnia.

Developments in Bosnia are closely related to broader regional stability. Outbreaks of violence in Croatia, Macedonia, or Kosovo could destroy a fragile Bosnian arrangement and imperil UN forces. Likewise, large-scale international intervention in Bosnia could encourage various elements to provoke fighting and appeal for armed support from UN troops, thus expanding the war outside Bosnia.

Discussion

What Vance-Owen Would Accomplish

Western governments are likely to continue the diplomatic process, whether or not military measures are taken against the Bosnian Serbs. The approaches contained in the Vance-Owen Plan, however, hold little prospect of stabilizing the region, even if international pressure brings about Bosnian Serb agreement to the Plan. Events on the ground are likely to drive the parties and the international community toward outcomes that will not preserve a multiethnic Bosnia.

If Bosnian Serbs approve the Vance-Owen Plan, a large international military effort could reduce the level of fighting, improve the delivery of humanitarian aid, and protect the remaining Muslim population of Bosnia. These objectives are achievable only as long as the United States and other contributors make a large, open-ended commitment of military ground forces rivaling in scale and duration the postarmistice effort in Korea by the United Nations. A UN effort would also provide the basis for a more gradual, less violent dissolution of the Bosnian state, a dissolution that the Intelligence Community believes is likely in any case.

Full Compliance Is Unlikely

Serbian President Milosevic takes seriously the prospect of tightened sanctions and possible airstrikes on Serbia, as demonstrated by his failed attempt to push the Bosnian Serb Assembly into endorsing the Vance-Owen Plan. He is prepared to use pressure on Serbia—including restricting the flow of weapons, fuel, and other supplies—so long as it prevents the West from acting forcefully or until the Bosnian Serbs sign on to Vance-Owen:

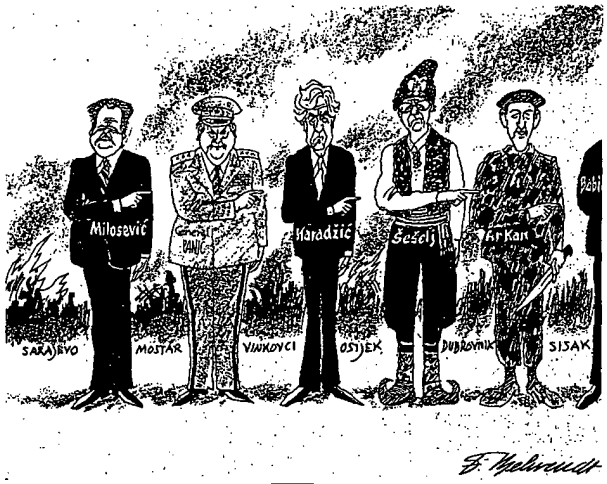


Figure 2. "Who's to blame?"

- Sealing the border completely will be difficult, and its military and economic impact will be not be immediate. The Intelligence Community has begun monitoring the Serbian-Bosnian border. Initial observations indicate that traffic has tapered off at that border, but some goods continue to move from the former Yugoslavia to Bosnia and we are not yet certain of the full extent of compliance.

- Milosevic's willingness to make good his threats to seal the border will depend on how credible Western resolve appears, how much compliance the West demands, and how vulnerable he believes he is to threats from domestic ultranationalists opposed to

his effort to force Bosnian Serb acceptance of Vance-Owen. In any case, some Serbian officials will not fully comply. Should Bosnian Serbs face a dire threat, Milosevic will undoubtedly help them.

Although there is still a chance that Bosnian Serbs may join Bosnian Croat and Muslim authorities in approving the Vance-Owen Plan, the goal of preserving Bosnia as a single, decentralized state runs counter to the long-term Serb objective of absorbing large parts of Bosnia. Moreover, none of the parties can be trusted to act in good faith:

- Serbs, Muslims, and Croats in Bosnia doubt that the international community will be willing to sustain the burden of the long-term military occupation necessary to implement the Plan.

- The Bosnian Serbs almost certainly will attempt to consolidate their military gains in territory not assigned to them under the Plan.

- The Bosnian Croats have little interest in preserving Bosnia and are content to maintain their grip on western Herzegovina. While willing to support an independent Bosnian state, Zagreb increasingly views Bosnia-Herzegovina as unviable and would be happy to absorb parts of it should it fall apart. In any case, Croatia will allow the Serbs to bear the blame for continuing the conflict.

- Demoralized by the failure of Vance-Owen to create a strong multiethnic central government, Muslim fighters will resist moves by Serbia and Croatia to absorb the remaining parts of a fragmented Bosnia.

All sides will scrutinize the behavior of UN forces to determine their resolve. An early test will be whether Bosnian Serb forces withdraw from areas assigned to the Bosnian Government that the Athens agreement designates for UN occupation, such as the northern corridor. Unless a substantial international force is deployed rapidly and demonstrates a willingness to use force, all sides—especially the numerous irregular military units, acting independently or in concert with national contingents—will try to subvert the terms of the Plan:

- Serbs are likely to mount periodic guerrilla and sabotage operations against UN forces. They may also threaten the civilian population and take hostages.

- The Muslims and remnants of government forces will be tempted to create violent incidents that could be blamed on the Serbs or the Croats.

- Demilitarization provisions almost certainly will require seizing heavy weapons and disarming combatants. Few UN members are willing to commit their forces to this task.

- Each party will try to hide as much weaponry as possible. The Serbs and Croats are likely to move weapons to their respective provinces to avoid UN monitoring.

- Renewed ethnic conflict in Bosnia and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia will flare up, with UN troops caught in the middle.

The Military Challenge

UN forces are almost certain to face situations requiring the use of force, most likely short of major combat operations. Attacks will consist mainly of sniper fire, hit-and-run attacks on convoys and bases, and mining of transport routes. However, even a single isolated attack on UN forces could cause a large number of casualties and sap the resolve of participants to remain engaged. The level of fighting will vary throughout Bosnia, depending on how well senior military commanders of all warring factions can or want to control local units:

- If the UN continues to operate as it has in Bosnia—that is, limiting the use of force to self-defense—local factional commanders will tolerate aggressive behavior by their units and defeat the Plan's implementation.

- If the UN permits troops to exercise "all necessary means," including the use of force, the various factions most likely will temporarily moderate their behavior. The shelf life of this moderation will depend on continuing and consistent UN willingness to employ force and on the success of demilitarization.

- The draft UN resolution authorizes "use of all necessary means" to implement Vance-Owen proposals, but it is unclear how various UN contingents will apply these rules of engagement. The UN probably will approve rules of engagement permitting preemptive action—similar to the rules adopted in Somalia—largely in order to ensure participation of a large contingent of US ground troops.

A UN force—particularly heavily armored units—would have difficulty maneuvering in Bosnia's rugged terrain and probably would have to adopt counterinsurgency tactics against a guerrilla resistance. British, French, and US forces, the main contributors to a Vance-Owen troop package, are well trained and experienced in counterinsurgency tactics. Other potential contributors may not be as capable, however, which could limit their usefulness.

Long-Term Challenges

The modifications to the Vance-Owen Plan reached in Athens indicate that efforts to implement a settlement will be undermined by protracted negotiations over boundary adjustments and population resettlement. For example, each party is likely to interpret to its own advantage the provision that UN forces replace combatant troops protecting villages in which their conationals form a majority:

- The Serbs most likely will claim that areas designated for UN protection be demarcated according to their current ethnic composition, including ethnically cleansed eastern Bosnia.

- The Bosnian Government, however, will demand that the 1991 census (which was the basis of the Vance-Owen Plan) be accepted as the justification for demarcation. (S NF)

UN forces will face major problems with continuing population movements. Even if hostilities cease and transportation routes open up, tens of thousands of refugees will try to move into regions under the control of

Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina

We estimate that fighting forces in Bosnia consist of about 60,000 to 80,000 predominantly Muslim troops in the Bosnian army, 50,000 to 75,000 troops in the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA), and 40,000 to 50,000 combatants in the Croatian Defense Forces. Irregular forces probably include about 25,000 Serbs, 50,000 Muslims, and 40,000 Croatians.

The most potent military threat to UN forces would come from the BSA, if there were a political decision by Bosnian Serb leaders to organize a military resistance. The BSA is the best organized and equipped armed force in Bosnia and Herzegovina and will remain a threat until demilitarized. In the unlikely event that the entire BSA did resist, however, it would be no match for sufficiently manned and equipped NATO-led forces. Under a sustained attack, the Army's resistance would be reduced to attacks by small units and bands of Serb partisans. BSA supplies, in addition to small-scale arms smuggling across the border in Serbia, would permit these bands to conduct low-level partisan warfare for an extended time.

Croatian Defense Forces (HVO) consolidated a loose collection of Croatian Democratic Union activists, local citizens, ex-Territorial Defense Forces personnel, and former Yugoslav Army officers and troops. The HVO is principally responsible for defending Croat areas of Herzegovina, but it lacks heavy weapons, logistic support, and an effective command structure. However, allied with the Croatian Army, the HVO could hold off Bosnian Serbs indefinitely in the regions it now occupies in Bosnia.

The Muslim-dominated Bosnian army is numerically equivalent to the BSA but is inferior to it in heavy weapons (tanks, APCs, and artillery) by at least an order of magnitude. It can neither hold its territory against determined Serb offensives nor retake lost ground. A cease-fire and the deployment of troops would reduce pressure on the Bosnian army, which might try to occupy areas vacated by the retreating BSA units. The Bosnian army might also conduct guerrilla attacks on Serb forces. Should UN forces try to stop this activity, the Muslims might respond violently, while trying to place blame on the Serbs.

their respective ethnic groups. Clashes between returning refugees and members of other ethnic groups are likely. UN forces probably will be expected to provide humanitarian assistance and overall security for persons seeking resettlement and those deciding to remain in place. The Plan is mute on this point.

UN forces will also have to assume responsibility for civil administration, humanitarian relief, and rebuilding infrastructure in the areas they occupy, pending agreement on a new government for Bosnia.

What's Expected of the Warring Parties

The Vance-Owen Plan calls for a cease-fire within 72 hours of the passage of a UN implementing resolution. Each side is then obligated to:

- *Avoid forward deployments or offensive actions.*
- *Exchange information on the size and location of forces, defensive works, and heavy weapons.*
- *Withdraw heavy weapons from conflict areas.*
- *Withdraw forces from defensive positions to designated provinces.*
- *Open free passage routes for UN forces, civilians, and humanitarian aid.*
- *Guarantee the restoration of civil administration.*

Implementing the Vance-Owen Plan will require international forces to oversee the disengagement, disarmament, and eventual demobilization of the combatants in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The role of an expanded UN force will be to:

- *Supervise force withdrawals and monitor redeployment of heavy weapons to designated areas.*
- *Establish and patrol demarcation lines and checkpoints between opposing forces.*
- *Monitor external borders to prevent the entry of troops, arms, or military equipment.*

Additional UN responsibilities, based on "clarifications" agreed to at the Athens meeting, would require international forces to occupy areas vacated by withdrawing Bosnian Serb forces and the policing of a Serb corridor running through a Croatian-controlled province in northern Bosnia.

A Limited European Commitment

Although most NATO allies have forces they could contribute to UN operations, they will link the size of any additional troop contributions for Bosnia to the dimensions of committed US ground forces. They believe that 25,000 to 40,000 US ground troops will be required to fill out the force of 70,000 to 80,000 troops that NATO planners deem necessary. In the Allies' view, a significantly smaller commitment of US forces would cast doubt on Washington's staying power and fail to provide sufficient manpower.

The Allies face legal, resource, political, and historic constraints that will limit their willingness to commit significant ground forces to any Bosnian operation. The bulk of the additional European contribution will have to come from France and Britain, but both are hard pressed to provide trained manpower beyond levels already committed. Other

Figure 3. "Call the Americans and ask what they intend doing about all this!" *Economist ©*

Allies, including Spain and the Netherlands, have expressed a willingness to contribute modest additional forces.

Major issues remain unresolved in NATO military and political consultations, including member participation, the level of national force commitments, cost sharing, and the rules of engagement. US assistance in strategic lift and intelligence assets will be essential. Command and control will continue to be a thorny problem within the UN and NATO. UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali insists on UN authority over any operation. NATO authorities will oppose extending this beyond political supervision and will seek wide latitude over operations.

Contingent on the necessary command and control arrangements, NATO has agreed to convene a group to facilitate the participation of non-NATO countries in planning the implementation of the Vance-Owen agreement. Additional forces might be available from East Europe, Ukraine, and Russia, but they would pose both political and military burdens. The UN almost certainly will seek to include Islamic and other non-European states. Such participation will increase command and control problems and run into resistance from the Serbs and perhaps the Croats.

Looking Ahead to Dissolution

Bosnian Serbs and Croats expect Bosnia-Herzegovina to fall apart regardless of Western efforts to implement a negotiated settlement. For now, they may be willing to tolerate a rump central government in Muslim-controlled areas, but Belgrade would oppose a state that harbored revanchist sentiments against Serbs. Serbia is also determined to prevent linkages between Bosnian Muslims and Sandzak Muslims. Because of heightened Croat-Muslim tensions, Croatia will oppose Muslim efforts to acquire weaponry in quantities large enough to threaten Croatian areas in Bosnia.

The Muslims will be embittered by Western lack of support for the government's defense effort, indifference to the collapse of the peace process, or a diplomatic process that leads to the partition of Bosnia. They would view UN reluctance to roll back Serb territorial gains as a betrayal by the West, which recognized the Bosnian state and admitted it to the UN a year ago. Terrorist attacks would probably occur inside and outside the former Yugoslavia. Serbian- or Croatian-led terrorist attacks would be less likely if it became clear that UN forces have no intention of fully implementing the Vance-Owen Plan.

We believe that all the protagonists and Western parties have moved incrementally away from the original Plan and will move further toward less ambitious concepts. Modifications of the Plan already conceded to the Muslims in exchange for their signature and to the Serbs at the Athens meeting portend further demands for changes by all sides. Redefining the initial goals of the Vance-Owen Plan, however, will strain coalition cohesiveness and diminish the credibility of Western resolve.

Figure 4
Current and Likely European Ground Force Commitments in the Former Yugoslavia [a]

Country	Current Ground Forces	Likely Additional Contribution
France	4,790	2,000 - 5,000
United Kingdom	2,648	2,000 - 5,000
Canada	2,559	500
Denmark	1,107	100 - 300
Netherlands	1,020	500 - 1,000
Belgium	989	300
Spain	930	200-500
Russia	878	400 - 1,000
Poland	870	200
Czech Republic	478	100
Norway	427	100
Ukraine	400	400
Sweden	256	1,000
Finland	216	100
Slovakia	120	0
Luxembourg	41	0
Portugal	30	0
Turkey	0	0
Italy	0	0
Total	**17,759**	**7,900 - 15,500**

[a] The Europeans also have a small number of troops in Serbia and Croatia as European Community monitors and aircrews flying relief supplies to Croatia and Bosnia. Moreover, the Allies also have naval warships in the Adriatic as part of NATO and WEU task forces monitoring the ban on arms shipments to the combatants and personnel on AWACS monitoring the no-fly zone over Bosnia. Finally, the British and the French have some ships on standby in the Adriatic to evacuate their forces if necessary.

The Russian Problem

Russia has expressed concern about the "restricted" command structure for the proposed operation to implement the Vance-Owen Plan and the possibility that Russian forces would be subordinated to NATO. Moscow believes that UN authorities must have more than nominal operational control and that the UN should establish a command structure that includes all the major contributing countries. Russian officials have urged US-Russian consultations and suggested using the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, which links East European countries and former Soviet republics to NATO, as a forum for planning operations:

- *Russian officials across the political spectrum suspect that NATO forces would be used only against the Bosnian Serbs.*
- *The Foreign Ministry probably believes that UN control of operations would ease Russian military reluctance to participate and would undercut domestic criticism that Moscow is selling out to the West.*

The gradual modification of the Vance-Owen proposals suggests at least three possible outcomes. All would require a large international military presence and the acquiescence, if not agreement, of all parties to border changes and population movements.

UN-Sponsored Safehavens or Eventually a Rump Muslim State

UN Security Council resolutions designating Srebrenica, Sarajevo, and other cities as protected areas is a step in this direction but still requires operational clarification. A large international presence would ensure a semblance of Bosnian Muslim control, facilitate humanitarian assistance, and keep Serbia and Croatia at arm's length—but at a cost of supplying military and financial support indefinitely. Belgrade would remain suspicious of Muslim intentions toward the Sandzak; Croatia would fear both renewed Serbian incursions and a rearmed Muslim population. The current Bosnian Government would be placed in limbo. These temporary safehavens could lead over time to a rump Muslim-dominated state that would be heavily dependent on UN military protection and Western assistance.

Muslim Entities Affiliated With Croatia

Affiliation of Muslim areas to Croatia provides a more feasible arrangement than long-term international protected areas. Despite frictions between Muslims and Croatians, President Izetbegovic has discussed "confederation" between Bosnia and Croatia on several occasions. Under such an arrangement, Croatia would provide the Muslims protection from the Serbs. The Croats would gain access to Bosnia's mineral resources and provide the Muslims protection against the Serbs while viewing a Muslim client state as a buffer against future Serbian aggression. Nonetheless, mutual Muslim-Croat distrust will most likely exacerbate tensions and would make implementation of this arrangement problematic.

De Facto UN Protected Areas

Under another variant, the parties might request UN protected zones for their disputed areas. As in the Croatian case, Bosnian Serbs are likely to refuse to permit the return of areas they occupy to Muslim control. In Athens, Bosnian Serb leaders insisted that UN forces replace their forces withdrawing from eastern Bosnia. Under this scheme, they would hope to consolidate administration by local Serbs and eventually to secure formal international acceptance of their authority. Similarly, Bosnian Croats and Muslims might resist relinquishing territory to Serbs or to each other unless it were part of a general land swap.

Bosnia and Regional Instability

In the absence of an internationally supervised settlement, fighting will continue indefinitely. Even with an agreement, the Bosnian situation will remain vulnerable to developments elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. Outbreaks of violence in Croatia, Kosovo, or Macedonia would jeopardize the fragile cease-fire, strain UN operations, and threaten regional stability.

Likewise, a larger UN operation in Bosnia risks encouraging various elements in neighboring states to use force to achieve their goals. The Croatian Government reportedly plans to attack Croatian Serbs in the event of a Western military intervention in Bosnia. Albanian radicals in Kosovo also reportedly hope to take advantage of a Western military presence in the area by fomenting an uprising against the Serbs. Such elements are likely to provoke fighting and then appeal for armed support from Western troops.

Warning Notice

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Information available as of 14 May 1993 was used in the preparation of this National Intelligence Estimate.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency
The Defense Intelligence Agency
The National Security Agency
The Bureau of Intelligence and Research,
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